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October 23, 2000

Honorable Donna Shalala
Secretary of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Room 615F
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Secretary Shalala:

I am a licensed fitter and dispenser of hearing instruments and my license is regulated by the Texas Department of Health. I write with respect to hearing aids.

I am very concerned with reports sent to you by the Food and Drug Administration. In these reports is a proposal for revising the current regulations governing the dispensing of hearing aids in this country. As a hearing health care provider, this disturbs me a great deal. Not only would this proposal restrict access to hearing health care providers, like myself, but would also dramatically increase the cost of hearing health care services.

Please carefully consider the impact that his proposed rule will have on the nation's hearing impaired and on hearing aid specialists. Already only 20 percent of those with hearing loss seek help for their hearing. If this proposal passes, and audiologists install themselves as the sole gatekeepers to hearing health care the costs will rise, thereby restricting even more hearing impaired people from seeking the help they need.

Please don't let the FDA put forth their proposed rule impeding access to needed hearing health care services for millions of Americans.

Sincerely,

Pamela R. Smith

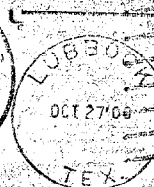
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